

# National Republican

WASHINGTON CITY, D. C.

FRIDAY MORNING, FEBRUARY 4, 1842.

One Cor. 10th and D, near Penna. Av.

W. J. MURKIN, Editor and Proprietor.

No. 2 cannot undertake to return rejected manuscripts. Contributors will therefore present them.

All communications, whether on business or for publication, should be addressed to W. J. MURKIN, Executive Member, Washington, D. C.

RECEPTIONS.

Mr. Grant's receptions will be held every Thursday during the session, between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m.

CHARLES BLAINE'S RECEPTIONS.

The reception, one of the Speaker of the House of Representatives, will be at his residence, 405 Pennsylvania street, from 9 to 11 o'clock, on each Friday evening of the session.

MRS. BLAINE'S RECEPTIONS.

Mr. Blaine's receptions will be held every Wednesday of the session, between the hours of 2 and 4 p.m.

DIPLOMATIC CORPS.

At the Russian Legation Madame de Gascos will receive on alternate Monday evenings, commencing on Monday, January 2, and will be at home on Saturdays, from 3 until 5 p.m.

WE ARE REQUESTED to state that in consequence of necessary repairs, there will be no evening receptions at the British Legation until special invitations are issued.

INCUBATED TARIFF ON BOOKS.

Mr. Morrell's bill proposed to increase the duty on foreign manufactured books. The bill, as originally drawn, made the duty specific, but so transposed the clause referring to books and pamphlets with irregularities as to completely confuse a reader, not born and bred to the book trade. The Senate simplified the bill, made the duty "per cent., ad valorem, and in that state it placed the House. The bill proposed to give only a slight protection to the mechanical interests of the book trade, and made no account whatever of literature, which it leaves to each its right through an international copyright. A good deal of lobbying has been done in opposition to the bill by the agents of English publishing houses established in New York, who have not failed to misrepresent the whole case; and in this they have been ably seconded by a class of American journals famous for the energy they exert in trying to reduce the industrial interests of the country to a level with those of Europe.

There are three great interests involved in this question of importing foreign books—the commercial, the mechanical and the artistic. Nothing need be said of the literary interest, for here in this country the publisher, with his characteristic short-sightedness, rarely condescends to take it into account. It was naturally natural that Mr. Morrell's bill, then, should find opponents among those interested in increasing the industry of England and decrease that of the United States. In a word these men ask the United States to give advantages in the book trade to Englishmen which the English Government has denied Americans. It is evident also that such presses as have undertaken to discuss this subject are but imperfectly acquainted with it, to all its bearings. Even the American publisher himself has but recently been brought to a sense of the injury his own trade was suffering from the importation into the country of foreign books, shown up under the present tariff and the manner of enforcing it are defective, yielding no revenue of any consequence to the Government, nor affording the people any advantage in the price of books.

In order to fully understand this question, and its influence on the American book trade, it will be necessary to go back to the decision of Lord St. Leonid, (1834) reviewing and reversing the decision of Lord Campbell, favorable to the protection in England, which had been accorded to American authors. That decision, (Lord St. Leonid's), while it struck a fatal blow at the rights of American authors in England, gave free license to the English publishing piracy, of all others the most unscrupulous, to appropriate to himself the very property his honest neighbor had purchased, and also to command the English and American markets. The more he increased the number of his editions, the more surely was he enabled to decrease the price of labor and a defy competition. This unscrupulous trade, at once ruined such American works as his honest neighbor had paid the American author for, and flooded the English and colonial markets with them, at a cost little above the price of paper, printing, and binding. Being free of all obligations to the author, it will be seen at a glance how great an advantage this worthy had over both the literary and commercial interests of the trade. This was inflicting a great wrong on the honest and deserving publisher, such as Murray and Bently, who had paid American authors generously for their works, and giving the rogue power to carry off what was morally their property. Nor could it be pleaded that those books, (America,) so highly praised by Englishmen, were held above the reach of the poor, for they could be had at all the circulating libraries and read for the smallest sum.

There were other evils inflicted upon American literature and labor by Lord Leonard's decision. It took from American authorship all hope of encouragement in England; and thus, having lost one of its best stimulants to exertion, its power to give employment to the American mechanic was lessened in a corresponding degree. And, too, experience has clearly shown that the tendency of the new state of things is inaugurated to centralize the book-making business in London. It also opened the door to a system of fraud which have since placed the commercial morality of the trade in a very unenviable light. The power it gave the dishonestly inclined to seize upon and fill the English markets with cheap reprints of every American book of value within reach, was at once taken advantage of, and at the very time this unscrupulous English publisher was printing and filling the American market with treacherous English books some honest publisher had paid copyright on, he was filling the English market with cheap editions of American books some honest publisher had paid copyright on. In short, it released the pirate from paying copyright in either country. It is no stretch of truth to say that he was protected by his own country in these transactions, and encouraged in this. Not a sign of reciprocity was apparent in the whole affair, and our Government stood silent by and saw England have her book-making interest with power to destroy ours. It has been denied that English publishers secretly print editions of copyrighted books for sale in this market. But recent events have shown that it is a very common practice. The English author is thus defrauded out of his copyright, while the American publisher who had paid a round sum for the early sheets of his work, finds a cheap English edition selling in his own market, at a price much lower than can be afford to make it. Now, there can be but one opinion of the injurious effect of such a state of things on American literature.

The American publisher had no such power, nor would he condescend to such shameful practices as have become common with his rival across the water. With such encouragement as we have described, English publishers at once established distributing houses in this country, and became manufacturers, importers, and merchants, filling every little bookshop in the country with their cheap and trashy prints. But these prints, at present so large a feature in the American book market, are nothing less than a curse upon those who buy them. They are badly printed, on the poorest of paper, and with showy covers made to catch the eye. They soon fall to pieces, and are valueless. These showy books are exposed for sale at about forty cents a copy, while the better printed and more substantial American books, fit for the library, lay on the same counter at one dollar. The difference in value not being apparent to the ordinary book purchaser, he takes what seems cheapest and lets the other remain. When, however, he finds he has been deceived, he will not return and buy the more valuable book.

But these cheap publications are not the only ones which have an injurious effect on the publishing interests of this country. The books which comprise what is known as Bob's Library have an equally damaging effect. The usual price for these bulky volumes is \$1.50 each. Now, it is well known that the Harper's have made several attempts to publish the same class of books, in a style equally good, for 75 cents per volume. These attempts have been invariably met by Mr. Bob's reducing his to the same price. Even then Mr. Bob's had an advantage over the American Library, inasmuch as persons who had previously purchased his edition, would prefer to preserve uniformity of style in their libraries. But Mr. Bob's put his prices up to the old standard as soon as the Harper's ceased to publish the same class of books. It is the liability to interference of this kind that keeps the American publisher from perfecting his machinery and giving the people better books at a cheaper price than they can be got from England. The case we have just recited is but one of hundreds which we might bring forward to prove that English competition, as it is now carried on, serves to increase rather than to diminish the price of books in this market. But must we, it may be asked, drive our mechanics from the trade to which they were educated, and perhaps into an almanack, that the reading public of this country may get books manufactured in England a cent or two per copy cheaper than they can be manufactured in this? We have too high an opinion of American character to believe that it would damage anything of the kind. We do know, however, that the agents of English publishing houses in this country use every means in their power to depress American literature, while making this country a mere dependency on England for our bibles and prayer-books, notwithstanding we have a "Bible House" of our own. F. C. A.

New Advertisements.

FOR RENT—NO. 2 NINETEENTH STREET, near 2d, in elegant rooms, socializing, &c., for 12 months, \$1,000. D. C. HARRIS, 19th Street, No. 2, Philadelphia, February 3, 1842. Price 25c.

FOR RENT—A DURABLE RESIDENCE IN Georgetown, No. 10 Prospect street; large rooms, well-furnished, in a quiet part of the city, with view of the Potowmack river, rent \$120 per month. D. C. HARRIS, 19th Street, Georgetown, February 3, 1842. Price 25c.

FOR SALE—A NEW AND NEATLY FINISHED HOUSE OF 8 rooms, with water, gas and fire, in a quiet part of Georgetown, No. 11 Prospect street, between 2d and 3d streets, between 12 and 13 o'clock.

FOR SALE—THE BAR AT GLIMPTON, Maryland, for six months, for 12 months, \$1,000.

JOSEPH H. SHAFIELD, 19th Street, Washington, D. C.

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